

268. We shall put letters in at a later stage to show that attempts were made to get information supplied by the company, and we shall call the engineers to show that it was advisable and reasonable under the contract to get this information. We shall then leave the matter to the Committee?—That does not get over the difficulty of the six months wasted.

269. I am not here to answer questions, Mr. Wilson; but I think I said the company was asked to give further information on the 5th November, 1891, and the information they were asked to give by the Government has since been supplied?—The whole question is whether the engineers have a right to it.

270. We now come to the question of selections under section 33 of the contract. We have made it clear that it was one year and six months before the company was floated after the contract was started. You say you have lost five years?—Five years and seven months, I think I made it out. That is not laid at the door of your Government, or of any Government, but is due to circumstances that happened preventing the company from working, such as modified contracts, and so on.

271. A year and a half elapsed before the company was floated?—That is cut out of the time altogether.

272. To meet the facilities of settlement you applied for regulations?—Yes, modifications under this clause.

273. You said further that it was only when the present Government came into office, or you let it be so inferred, that the company was informed that the regulations could not be made?—We first of all negotiated with the late Government, and there were certain difficulties raised as to the method of dealing with them. We suggested forms of regulations—erroneously called “regulations” at that time—and the negotiations were carried on and arguments as to certain rights of the company. We seemed to be bringing the matter to a head at the time the change of Government took place. We then referred it to you, and you said the question of the regulations or agreement would be considered, but you would make the mining reserves first. And of course the correspondence we shall put in will show the exact position we have been in throughout; and I suggest that the correspondence will give you more information than I can give you.

274. I would prefer you to say yes or no. Was there a refusal to give regulations when the present Government came into office?—I think that was the time of the first refusal. I think you said you had no power to make them.

275. Did you not get this letter of the 29th August, 1890, from Mr. Fergus. [Letter put in. (See Appendix, page 2.)]?—Yes, that is quite correct, but that does not affect the question in any way.

276. Did not the regulations you submitted, and which this letter is a reply to, provide that the Commissioners of Crown Lands should give consent?—No; we referred to them in this way—the Commissioner of Crown Lands being the person who understood the conditions of the lands and the country, he should be able to advise the Government directly in dealing with these questions, and the Minister should take his advice as being authoritative advice. That is the only suggestion we made as to delegating powers to the Commissioners.

277. At any rate, you received this letter of the 29th August?—Yes, we received it and replied to it on the 9th September. (See Appendix, page 2.)

278. I will turn to the regulations. [Clause 2 of the company's draft regulations read. (See Appendix, page 6.)]—Yes, that is perfectly true.

279. Were you not told that no such power as that existed under section 33?—

280. *Mr. Mills.* Are these regulations prepared by the company for the Governor's approval?—Yes. [Letter of 9th September put in. (See Appendix, page 2.)]

281. *Hon. Mr. Seddon.* You were told that the regulations were contrary to law?—We did not concur in it.

282. I want to clear up this point about the regulations being refused when the present Government came into office?—I do not think that is the inference.

283. You thought a change of Government might give you a chance of getting new regulations?—We were simply negotiating when the new Government came into office, and we were making satisfactory progress at the time.

284. On the 27th January, 1891, you sent a telegram to the Minister for Public Works to the effect that you hoped you could count on his assistance to get the regulations settled in Westland? (See Appendix, page 7.)—Yes, I did.

285. That is the first communication on this subject with the Minister for Public Works of the present Government?—Yes.

286. That is five months after the regulations were refused by the late Government?—They were not refused by the late Government.

287. Were you not told by letter of the same date that considerable mining reserves were about to be made?—Yes. That referred to an application made in a letter of the 29th August. You say the land is partly auriferous, therefore objection was taken. [Letter put in. (See Appendix, page 2.)]

288. The company were told by the late Government that these mining reserves were to be made—that is, before we came into office?—That referred to particular blocks—a particular piece of country.

289. On the 10th February, 1891, did you forward another new draft regulation?—Yes; we have it here? (See Appendix, page 8.)

290. On the 24th you were informed that these regulations were drawn up on the assumption that the Government did not intend to make reserves for mining purposes? (See Appendix, page 9.)—Yes; that is so.

291. The objection the Government took was that the regulations were sent in and drawn up on the assumption that there were to be no large mining reserves?—Yes.

292. You only arranged the terms of agreement within a month or six weeks?—Yes; we have